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## Colombia

**Post:** Bogota

### **Aurelio Iragorri Appointed New Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development**

**Report Categories:**

Agricultural Situation

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**Report Highlights:**

Recently reelected Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos appointed Aurelio Iragorri as the new Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Minister Iragorri was previously the Minister of Interior and had an active role in the dialogue and negotiations with farmers following the nationwide agricultural sector strikes in August 2013.

**General Information:**

On August 6, 2014, the recently reelected Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos appointed Mr. Aurelio Iragorri as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. The decision was likely due to his successes in resolving disputes with the agricultural sector following the August 2013 nationwide protests. (For further details on protests, please refer to GAIN reports listed below). During the crisis, but as the Minister of Interior, Mr. Iragorri was able to establish a broad dialogue with the protestors and negotiate terms for credit alleviation for small-scale farmers, the establishment of safeguard measures for agricultural products against competition from the Andean Community (CAN) and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the suspension of Resolution 970, which establishes the requirements for trade and use of seeds in Colombia, and the reduction of tariffs on agricultural inputs.

Even though Minister Iragorri was directly involved in facilitating the dialogue between the Government of Colombia (GOC) and protesting farmers, some critics of his appointment highlight a lack of technical knowledge on agricultural production; however, his family history, from the Department of Cauca, is ostensibly linked to agricultural endeavors in the sugar and livestock sectors. In addition, critics may be motivated to object to Mr. Iragorri's appointment given the political leadership shift in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. For over the past ten years, the Ministry has been led by someone selected from the Conservative Party, which did not back Santos, rather his opponent, in the June 2014 run-off election. Minister Iragorri is from President Santos' National Unity Party.

The new Minister's mandate will be to continue to promote dialogue and resolve disputes between the GOC and the farmers. Indications are that he will lead efforts to expand agricultural production applying an additional 3 million hectares of land for different commodity clusters, including cacao, rubber, forestry, fruits and vegetables for export markets, and corn and soybeans for domestic feed. In addition, the Ministry's focus will be to raise agricultural exports 20% over the next four years and establish programs that contribute to reducing rural poverty.

Minister Iragorri has a close relationship with President Santos and previously served in his administration as the Minister of Interior, Secretary General of the Presidency, and High Counselor for Political Affairs. Prior to those positions, Mr. Iragorri worked for the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Ministry of Finance, the National Auditor, and the Ministry of Justice.

Iragorri has a law degree from Javeriana University, in Bogotá, Colombia, and a graduate degree in Marketing and Business Administration from the New York University. He is the son of a former Senator and the grandson of former President Guillermo León Valencia.

**Other Relevant Reports Submitted by FAS/Bogotá:**

Report Number	Subject	Date Submitted
	Agricultural Protests Update – Sector Discontent Continues As Election Season Begins	1/7/2014

	Agricultural Protests Update - Seven Decrees Established to Support Agricultural Pact Agreement	9/20/2013
	Agricultural Sector Protests Update	9/16/2013
	Agricultural Sector Protests Put Santos Government in Crisis Mode	9/6/2013